**COUN 2000**

Living & Communicating in a Diverse Society

**Fall 2025**

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**Department of Special Education, Rehabilitation, and Counseling**

**College of Education**

Instructor Information:

**Saanya Verdia**

**EDUC 2118**

**sav0043@auburn.edu**

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Office Hours:

**Friday (12:30pm – 1:30pm)**

**SYLLABUS**

**Course Number:** COUN 2000 (3 semester hours)

**Course Title:** Living & Communicating in a Diverse Society

**University:** Auburn University

**Prerequisites:** None

**Instructor:** Saanya Verdia

**Contact Info:** sav0043@auburn.edu

**Class Meeting:** Tuesday & Thursday, 11-12:15 pm

**Date Syllabus Prepared:** June 2020 revised July 2023, August 2023, December 2023, August 2025.

**Required Readings and Videos**

**Text**: Johnson, A. (2018). *Privilege, Power, and Difference* (3rd Ed). McGraw Hill.

**Chapters, Videos, and Articles:**

Blumenfeld, W. (2006). Christian Privilege and the Promotion of “Secular” and Not-So “Secular” Mainline Christianity in Public Schooling and in the Larger Society. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 39*(3), 195–210.

Dancy, T. E., II, Edwards, K. T., & Earl Davis, J. (2018). Historically White Universities and Plantation Politics: Anti-Blackness and Higher Education in the Black Lives Matter Era. *Urban Education, 53*(2), 176–195

*Lee County Remembrance Project*. (2020). *YouTube*. Retrieved August 12, 2023, from https://youtu.be/wq7-ndLM9m0.

**Course Description:**

This course meets SLO 9. The class addresses the context of relationships, issues, and trends in a multicultural and diverse society related to culture, ethnicity, nationality, age, gender, sexual orientation, mental and physical characteristics, education, family values, religious and spiritual values, socioeconomic status and unique characteristics of individuals, couples, families, ethnic groups, and communities. Living in a diverse society requires successful communication, thus this course focuses on navigating difficult topics (often referred to as difficult dialogues).

**Course Objectives:**

To support students in becoming competent, committed, and reflective professionals in a diverse world. Upon course completion, students will:

1. Expand their knowledge of multicultural and pluralistic trends, including characteristics and concernsbetween and within diverse groups

2. Gain exposure to a broad array of attitudes, beliefs, understandings, and acculturative experiences, including specific experiential learning activities

3. Become familiar with individual, couple, family, group, and community strategies for working with diverse populations and ethnic groups

4. Gain awareness and understanding of biases, prejudices, and injustice and of intentional and unintentional oppression and discrimination

5. Understand advocacy processes needed to address institutional and social barriers that impede access and equity

6. Learn about the value of cultural diversity

7. Have skills to engage in conversations about race, ethnicity, and culture in ways that are respectful and that support intergroup and intragroup cohesion to work toward common solutions

**Course Philosophy**

There is value in understanding the culture of those around us. This course will expose students to other cultures, and challenge beliefs they may hold about individuals from other cultures that may impede their ability to work and live in a diverse society. The class will blend lectures and readings with experiential learning and self-exploration. It is critical that the environment is one of respect and sensitivity to create a space in which people can share their worldviews.

**Course Content** **and Schedule:** This course schedule is tentative and may change at the instructor’s discretion. Any changes to the schedule will be announced in class and on Canvas, and it is the student’s responsibility to be aware of all changes.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Module** | | **Topics** | **Required Readings** | **Due Dates** | |
| 1 | | **Introduction**   * Introductions * Syllabus Overview * Perspective Exploration |  |  | |
| 2 | | **Skills for Deeper Conversations**   * Skills for Difficult Dialogue * Defense Mechanisms * Terminology * Implicit Bias | Johnson’s Introduction & Chapter 1 | **Reflection 1: Where are you now, and where are you going?**  **Due: Sunday, August 31st at 11:59 PM** | |
| 3 | | **The Power of Narratives**   * Community Building * Socioemotional Development * Gardener’s Tale * Emmett Till | Johnson’s Chapter 6  Lee County Remembrance Project Video |  | |
| 4 | | **Mapping Differences**   * Social Implications * Privilege * Oppression | Johnson’s Chapter 2  Dancy et al., 2018 | **Reflection 2: Lee County Remembrance Project**  **Due: Sunday, September 14th at 11:59 PM** | |
| 5 | | **Institutional Harm**   * Documentary: Race – The Power of Illusion * Historical Context of Race and Racism * Types of Racism * Anti-Racism | Johnson’s Chapter 4 |  | |
| 6 | | **Racial Identity Development**   * Identity Development * Intersectionality |  |  | |
| 7 | | **Colour of fear video** | **Reflection week** | **Reflection week** | |
| 8 | | **Disability Visibility**   * History and Rights * Health Disparities |  | **Reflection 3: Racial Identity Models**  **Due: Sunday, October 12th at 11:59 PM** | |
| 9 | | **Invisible Boxes**   * Sex vs Gender * Gender Norms * Sexism   **\*No Thursday class due to fall break. Enjoy!** | Johnson’s Chapter 7 |  | |
| 10 | | **LGBTQ+**   * Terminology * Discrimination * Inclusivity and hope | Johnson’s Chapter 8 | **Group Video Project:**  **Discussion on Ableism**  **Due: Sunday, October 26th at 11:59 PM** | |
| 11 | | **Wealth, Class, and Social Status**   * Economic systems * Intersectionality * Social mobility | Johnson’s Chapter 3 & 5 |  | |
| 12 | | **Role of Religion**   * Privilege and Oppression * Interfaith and Pluralism | Johnson’s Chapter 9  & Blumenfeld, 2006 | **Video Project: Wealth Disparity**  **Due: Sunday, November 9th at 11:59 PM** | |
| **13** | **Reflection week** | |  | |  |
| No class (Flex week) | | | | | |
| ***Thanksgiving Break November 24th-28th*** | | | | | |
| 16 | AU Culture project | |  | | **AU Culture Project**  **All projects (ppt) due on Canvas:**  **Sunday, November 23rd at 11:59 PM**  **Presentations will take place in class Dec. 2-6th** |
| **Final exam: Thursday Dec 11th (10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.)** | | | | | |

**Course Requirements:**

**Readings**: At the beginning of each week you should have assigned readings completed prior to attending class. The readings will introduce you to the discussion for the day.

**In-Class Activities (15 points):** to receive credit for in-class activities, you must be in attendance, and you must participate in the activity. An unexcused absence will result in a 0 on that day, these points/activities cannot be made up.

**Reflection Assignment: Where are you now, and where are you going? (minimum 500 words without title, name, double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12pt font; 10 points)** Write a paper answering the following prompts:

* **2 points:** Who are you? To answer this question, delve into different aspects of your identity (your age, your sex, your family, where you grew up, whether you have pets, have religious affiliation, play a sport, what country/city/town you’re from).
* **2 points:** How are you *similar* to other students at Auburn or in this class? These similarities might be visible or invisible. How did you learn you have these shared experiences or identities?
* **2 points:** How are you *different* from other students at Auburn or in this class? These differences might be visible or invisible. How did you learn about these differences?
* **2 points:** In this class, we will be discussing: race, gender, sexuality, disability, wealth and poverty, religious affiliation, as these topics relate to us and other people. Which of these topics will you be *most comfortable discussing and why?* Which of these topics might be more *difficult to navigate*, and why?
* **2 points:** Where do you see yourself 10 years from now? Describe the diversity of race, gender, sexuality, religion, disability, and wealth that you may experience/encounter at that stage of your life.

**Reflection Assignment for Lee County Remembrance Project (500 words minimum, double-spaced + Reference Page, 12pt font; 10 points)** Write a paper answering the following prompts after viewing the Lee Country Remembrance Project Guest Lecture

* **6 points:** Provide a detailed description of the 3 most important pieces of information you learned from the LCRP lecture (2 pts per detailed description). What is “most important” to you will be subjective: for example, these could be points connected to your identity, information that surprised you, connections to our class content, or points that caused an emotional reaction
* **2 points:** Explore in detail whether the information presented to you was new. What did you learn that you had not been previously aware of before this lecture? What experiences in life led to you not being aware of this history? If you were not taught this in school, why do you think that is?
* **1 point:** What information did you already know before this lecture? What experiences facilitated you already being aware of this history? If you were not aware of any of this information, discuss what you wish you had known before today
* **1 point:** Finally, discuss how you might share what you learned from the LCRP presentation with a friend or family member. Discuss who that person is, what their prior knowledge of the topic might be, and why it may be important for you to have that conversation with them
* **1 point will be removed for each of the following:**
  + Failureto reach the word requirement
  + Failure to include references (APA format)

**Reflection Assignment for Racial Identity Models (500 words minimum, double-spaced + Reference Page, 12pt font; 10 points)** Write a paper addressing the following prompts after reviewing all the Racial Identity Development Models and viewing the lecture that incorporates Racial Identity.

* **2 pt: Use of the chosen Racial identity development model that best fits you**
* **2 pt:** Exploration of at least 2 stages you feel most closely align with where you fit from said model. This should include a description of the stages and practical applications from your own life (e.g., descriptive examples that indicate being at said stage)
* **2 pt:** Examination of how your identity and experiences have helped your racial identity development growth
* **2 pt:** Examination of how your identity and experiences have hindered your racial identity development growth
* **2 pt: Based on what you presented above regarding the different oppressions and privilege you experience**, how are your opinions, those you have empathy for, biases, prejudices, and life goals influenced by these experiences? Give us 2-3 examples
* 1 point will be removed for each of the following
  + Failureto reach word requirement
  + Failure to include references (APA format)

**Group Video Project - Ableism: 20-30 minutes (15 points)**

**You will be assigned a group in class. Record a group discussion on Zoom after you watch the documentary *Crip Camp—A Disability Revolution*. Your group should hold a thorough and nuanced discussion of the documentary which should include the following:**

* **5 points:** Each member should describe the two most important pieces of information gained in the documentary. What is “most important” to you will be subjective: for example, these could be points connected to your identity, or information that surprised you or caused an emotional reaction
* **5 points:** Group members will engage in a thorough discussion by asking and answering questions with one another. This discussion should be organic as if members are talking with one another naturally about the documentary. Points will be awarded based on the following:
  + questions are insightful and reflective of a thorough understanding of the documentary
  + questions and answers connect to other course content learned across the semester
  + it is clear from the question-and-answer content that all group members have reflected on their identities as they related to the documentary
* **5 points:** Based on the group discussion, the group will consider together how their opinions, biases, empathy for, and/or prejudice for diverse abilities have been shaped and impact their engagement
* 1 point will be removed for each other following:
  + The recording is outside the required time limit of 20-30 minutes long
  + Not everyone was engaged
  + Group members are distracted (for example, by phones, other people in the room, driving, walking, etc).

**Video Project – Wealth Disparity: 5-6 minutes (10 points)**

**Discuss the following questions on video after listening to the assigned podcast and engaging in the assigned poverty simulation:**

* **2 points:** Describe your relationship, understanding of, and experiences with money and/or socioeconomic status. Utilize 1-2 key life experiences (for example, experiences that helped you grow, molded you, or had a deep impact) to illustrate this relationship
* **2 points:** Discuss how your identity intersected or influenced the experiences you described above. How does **your intersectionality** influence how you think and engage in economics?
* **3 points:** Discuss three aspects of the podcast that were most eye-opening or meaningful to your learning
* **1 point:** Discuss your experience with the simulation
* **2 points:** How are your opinions, those you have empathy for, biases, prejudices, and/or life goals influenced by your intersectionality and your understanding of poverty in America? Give 2 concrete examples

**AU Culture group project - 15-20 minute presentation, including videos (15 points)**

**This is your biggest project this semester; it gives you and others the chance to reflect on your growth, conduct meaningful research about Auburn, and share your learning.**

**Options:**

1. Disability
2. Gender and Sexuality
3. Race and Ethnicity
4. Religion and Spirituality
5. Veteran Status and Veteran Affairs

* **2 points:** Describe the history of the topic you were assigned, both at Auburn and nearby institutions in comparison to the country at large (this is a good place to include facts and statistics)
  + Who is impacted? What has been done to address this issue in past years?
  + How does the community discuss this issue?
* **5 points:** Describe how this issue is *currently* viewed and experienced on campus by students, administration, and the community at large
  + Were there any recent events that were covered by newspapers or radio stations? What have you found on social media?
  + Discuss groups and individuals who have made changes in this area
    - What can still be done to improve the current services in this area?
    - Reflect on the visibility and access of these services, as well as any neglect you may have noticed
* **3 points:** Interview 3 individuals who are connected to this issue in some capacity
  + - You will include a 1-minute video of each individual you interview
    - You will submit the full video interview with a transcript to your instructor
* **5 points:** Each group member discusses how they were impacted by this project
  + Discuss your strengths and weaknesses as a group member
  + What did you contribute to the project?
  + How has learning this information impacted you personally?
  + How will you use this information moving forward?

**Final Exam**

The final exam will be administered using an online format. If you cannot access an online exam (smartphone, laptop, tablet, etc.), please contact me immediately after the first class. The exam format will be multiple choice and short-answer response questions, based on the readings, videos, class lectures, and discussions. The best way to do well is to stay actively involved in the course material (take notes as you read, review lectures, and quiz yourself).

### **Assignment Grading System**

**Attendance & In-Class Activities:**

10 activities 15 points

**Video Projects**

Wealth Disparity: Podcast & Activity 10 points

Group Video Project: Ableism 15 points

**Reflections**

Where are you now, where are you going? 10 points

Racial Identity Models 10 points

Lee County Remembrance Project 10 points

**Presentation**

AU Culture 15 points

**Assessments**

Final Exam 15 points

**Total 100 points**

**Grade Criteria** (grades will be rounded to the nearest whole number)**:**

A 90 - 100 points

B 80 – 89 points

C 70 – 79 points

D 60 – 69 points

F < 60 points

**Class Policy Statements:**

**Extra Credit Policy:**

You are eligible to earn extra credit in this course (described below). I reserve the right to add additional extra credit opportunities as the course progresses. However, the maximum total extra credit you may earn in this course is 6 points.

See extra credit opportunities below:

1. SONA Extra Credit. The College of Education has a subject pool operated through SONA system. The system provides students access to sign up for research studies for course extra credit. These studies can be in person or online. For every SONA credit you earn, you earn [1] extra credit point(s). If you have questions about participating in studies, please email [sona@auburn.edu](mailto:sona@auburn.edu).

Late Assignment Policy: Late assignments are not acceptable. It is expected that you have completed all assignments by 11:59 pm on the due date. All assignments will be turned in via Canvas. If you run into technology difficulties on Canvas, it is your responsibility to make sure the assignment is still completed and received on time. Contingency plans include an email with the assignment attached or a link to the assignment in a University box folder. Failure to turn an assignment in on time OR failure for the instructor to access the electronic version of an assignment will result in unsatisfactory completion of that course requirement, and in many instances, would mean an inability to pass the class. It is therefore imperative that students complete all course requirements on time. I reserve the right to allow exceptions to this policy, for example, in the event of an emergency.

Attendance Policy: Attendance is required.Students are granted excused absences for the following reasons: illness of the student or serious illness of a member of the student’s immediate family, death of a member of the student’s immediate family, trips for student organizations sponsored by an academic unit, trips for university classes, trips for participation in intercollegiate athletic events, subpoena for a court appearance, and religious holidays. Students who wish to have excused absences from class for any other reason must contact the instructor in advance of the absence to request permission. The instructor will weigh the merits of the request and render a decision. When feasible, the student must notify the instructor before the occurrence of any excused absences, but in no case, shall notification occur more than one week after the absence. Appropriate documentation for all excused absences is required. Please see the *Student Policy eHandbook* at [www.auburn.edu/studentpolicies](https://cas.auburn.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=ef2eb0b81d90495098a27dc4053361aa&URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww.auburn.edu%2fstudentpolicies) for more information on excused absences. For an excused absence to not count against the attendance grading requirement, students must make up the missed class period in a manner acceptable to the course instructor within one week of the absence or notification of absence (in cases when notice before the absence is not possible—but again, all excused absences must be communicated to the instructor no later than one week of the absence).

**AI Policy:**

In this course, students are permitted to use Generative AI Tools such as ChatGPT for formatting (e.g., APA style, grammar, sentence structure, etc.), study assistance, and specific instances designated by the instructor. Students ARE NOT allowed to use Generative AI Tools for content generation. As always, students must properly use attributions, including in-text citations, quotations, and references. **To maintain academic integrity, students must disclose any use of AI-generated material.** A student should include the following statement in assignments to indicate use of a Generative AI Tool: “The author(s) would like to acknowledge the use of [Generative AI Tool Name], a language model developed by [Generative AI Tool Provider], in the preparation of this assignment. The [Generative AI Tool Name] was used in the following way(s) in this assignment: [e.g., brainstorming, grammatical correction, citation, which portion of the assignment].”

Technology Use: During class, it is expected that students remain focused on the class content and discussions. Please refrain from using electronic devices for matters unrelated to the class, unless there is an emergency. If you anticipate the need to use your device for a specific reason, please discuss it with the instructor for approval in advance. If you have accommodations related to technology use or any other aspect of the class, please communicate these with the instructor at the beginning of the semester or as soon as possible. We are committed to providing an inclusive learning environment and will work collaboratively to ensure that your needs are met.

Accommodations: Students who need accommodations are asked to electronically submit their approved accommodations through AU Access and to arrange a meeting with me, your instructor, during the first week of classes. If you have not established accommodations through the Office of Accessibility, but need accommodations, make an appointment with the Office of Accessibility, 1228 Haley Center, 844-2096 (V/TT).

Honesty Code: All portions of the Auburn University student academic honesty code (Title XII) found in the Student Policy eHandbook (http://www.auburn.edu/student\_info/student\_policies/) apply to this class. All academic honesty violations or alleged violations of the SGA Code of Laws will be reported to the Office of the Provost, which will then refer the case to the Academic Honesty Committee.

Office Hours: I am available by appointment only. Campus email is the best way to reach me to schedule an appointment. I encourage you to make an appointment if you have any questions or concerns about the course or your performance in it. I am happy to meet with you via Zoom or in person on Fridays 12:30pm – 1:30pm. Response time to e-mails is 48-hours Monday-Friday 8 AM – 5 PM.